Actes des congrès de la Société française Shakespeare

32 | 2015
Nouvelles lectures de *Love's Labour's Lost*

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Electronic version
URL: http://journals.openedition.org/shakespeare/3239
DOI: 10.4000/shakespeare.3239
ISSN: 2271-6424

Publisher
Société Française Shakespeare

Electronic reference
Louise Fang, « Players, Cheats, and Games of Wit in Shakespeare's *Love's Labour's Lost* », *Actes des congrès de la Société française Shakespeare* [Online], 32 | 2015, Online since 20 March 2015, connection on 24 July 2020. URL : http://journals.openedition.org/shakespeare/3239 ; DOI : https://doi.org/10.4000/shakespeare.3239

Players, Cheats, and Games of Wit in Shakespeare's *Love's Labour's Lost*

Louise Fang

1 Many critics such as Louis A. Montrose,[1] Katherine R. Larson,[2] or Donatella Baldini[3] have underlined the essential part played by games in Shakespeare's *Love's Labour's Lost*. This is of course especially true of wordplay which turns the entire play into a "civil war of wits" (II.i.222[4]) to quote the Princess of France. In this paper I shall study to what extent early modern concepts of playing, and especially word-playing, influence the dynamics of *Love's Labour's Lost*; and how, in turn, *Love's Labour's Lost* plays with the courtly rules of early modern games. My argument is that the expected match of "fair tongue[s]" (II.i.72) between the two courts is repeatedly turned into what would then have been considered to be "foul play". This paves the way for a satire of courtly fashionable games and for a deeper exploration of the true motive of playing and its relation to time. First, I shall see how early modern conduct books and rhetoric handbooks construed the art of conversation itself as a game and to what extent this is both mirrored and satirized in *Love's Labour's Lost*. In the light of these early modern conceptions of witty wordplay, I will then see that the characters of *Love's Labour's Lost* use games in order to cheat or to indulge in forms of "foul play" which highlight the underlying violence of such games. Indeed, *Love's Labour's Lost* may be read as a satire of courtly modes of play that delves deeper into the true escapist purpose of play: through their games, the characters of *Love's Labour's Lost* try to mask the passing of the time, but their ludic quest is vain as shown by Marcadé's abrupt announcement of the death of the king of France.

"A set of wit well played": conversation as game in *Love's Labour's Lost*

2 In *Love's Labour's Lost*, Shakespeare takes up several metaphors that liken witty conversations to games. These were in fact manifold in conduct books and rhetoric manuals of the time. Indeed, games of wit were often compared to archery for example,

a metaphor we find on numerous occasions throughout the play: Boyet describes the ladies' "conceits" as being "fleeter than arrows" (V.ii.260-261). Comparisons such as this one were aimed at underlining the speed of the players and, hereby, to emphasise the sharpness of their wit. According to Baldassare Castiglione in Thomas Hoby's 1561 translation of *The Book of the Courtier*, for instance: a "quippie ought to be shott out and hit the pricke beefore a man can descerne that he that speaketh it can thinke upon it, elles it is colde and litle woorth".[5] The metaphor of archery brings out the competition at stake in conversational games, something that we also find through the fencing metaphors that pervade *Love's Labour's Lost*.[6] These games were, as shown by John Turner in *Shakespeare: Out of Court*,[7] of great political importance for courtiers who vied against each other for honour and prestige or "praise" as the Princess terms it in the hunting scene of IV.i: "As I for praise alone now seek to spill/ The poor deer's blood that my heart means no ill" (IV.i.34-35). The agonistic dimension of these games was certainly very palpable. Courtiers strove to win the game of conversation just as Holofernes comically tries to prove his superior knowledge through the figure of accumulation in IV.ii: "The deer was, as you know, *sanguis*, in blood, ripe as the pomewater, who now hangeth like a jewel in the ear of *caelum*, the sky, the welkin, the heaven, and anon falleth like a crab on the face of *terra*, the soil, the land, the earth" (IV.ii.3-6). This figure of accumulation had actually been criticised by George Puttenham in *The Art of English Poesy* (1589) as an awkward attempt to win the game of conversation: "Art and good policy moves us many times to be earnest in our speech, and then we lay on such load and so go to it by heaps as if we would win the game by multitude of words and speeches."[8]

3 Tennis was also used as a metaphor to illustrate the ideal courtly game of wits. In fact, both George Puttenham and Stefano Guazzo allude to tennis. Puttenham describes the antanaclasis – the figure that structures the "set of wit" (V.ii.29) between Rosaline and Katherine in V.ii – as a form of verbal tennis in *The Art of English Poesy* (1589): "Ye have another figure which by his nature we may call the Rebound, alluding to the tennis ball which, being smitten with the racket, rebounds back again, and where the last figure before played with two words somewhat like, this playeth with one word written all alike but carrying divers senses."[9] This comparison is extended to conversation itself in Stefano Guazzo's *The Civil Conversation* (which was translated into English in 1581): "to couet to speak always, and never to hear others, is a Kind of Tyranny, so that in Talk the Speaker and the Hearer ought to agree to keep Turns as it were, as they do at tennis."[10] In both cases, tennis illustrates not only the swiftness of wit of both players but also the reciprocity of the exchange. Indeed, according to B. Castiglione, the ideal courtier had "to be nimble and quicke at the play at tenise".[11] Incidentally the adjective "nimble" was also often used in the phrase "a nimble tongue" to describe witty jesting as shown by the Princess of France's line in V.ii: "A heavy heart bears not a nimble tongue"(V.ii.711). Both players must be of comparable strength to give rise to a harmonious game of wits. In this regard, we could contrast Rosaline and Katherine's dialogue in V.ii with that between the Princess and the Forester at the beginning of IV.i, which is cut short by the latter's inability to respond to the Princess's wit. Conversely, in Rosaline and Katherine's "set of wit" (V.ii.29),[12] stichomythia (V.ii.14-29) underlines the aptitude of both players and the repeated use of antanaclasis around the word 'light' suggests the image of a tennis ball rebounding from one side of the court to the other.

4 Although, as we have seen, all these metaphors can be found in *Love's Labour's Lost*, they are implicitly mocked or turned upside down. Indeed, characters that draw these comparisons – the Princess of France, Boyet, Armado (who often resorts to fencing metaphors) – mean to emphasise the courtly aspect of their conversation. However, Boyet, for instance, turns the archery metaphor into a bawdy quibble in IV.i.102-132, so much so that the comparison shifts from archery to bowls with Costard's cue:

> MARIA. Come, come, you talk greasily, your lips grow foul.
> COSTARD. She's too hard for you at prick, sir. Challenge her to bowl.
> BOYET. I fear too much rubbing. Good night, my good owl.
> IV.i.130-132

5 The game of bowls was much less praised by writers of the time – and lends itself to bawdy puns in the play. In fact, in 1541 Henry VIII had issued a proclamation forbidding games such as bowls or dice (except at Christmas) in order to encourage the practice of archery.[13] Similarly, the Princess's praise of the tennis match of wits between her ladies is eventually contradicted by Rosaline's thinly veiled insult when she mentions smallpox, which turns the playful banter into a violent verbal duel superseding the more ludic aspect of the previous exchange:

> ROSALINE. 'Ware pencils, ho! Let me not die your debtor,
> My red dominical, my golden letter.
> O, that your face were not so full of O's!
> PRINCESS. A pox of that jest, and I beshrew all shrows.
> V.ii.43-46

6 On these occasions, the courtiers' inability to play within the rules of courtly conversational games leads them to a stalemate. It is as though the play drew our attention to the game itself as much as to its limits and risks. Shakespeare implicitly parodies the courtly games of wit and the art of "civil conversation". Furthermore, he often overturns the usual metaphors likening courtly conversation to aristocratic pastimes by comparing them to more popular and less refined games such as bowls (as has just been mentioned) or even dice as in I.ii when Moth plays with the words "three years" as he would with dice (I.ii.42-45), and in V.ii.230-237 when Berowne and the Princess throw two "treys" of words ("treys" = a throw at dice). Dice were heavily condemned by most writers of the time, including Thomas Elyot, as an invention of the devil,[14] although several texts suggest they were also an important part of the life at court. In the *Book of the Courtier* for instance, dice are listed amongst the ordinary occupations of a gentleman as long as he played "not wholye for monies sake, nor fume and chafe in his losse."[15]

Gamesters and Cheats in *Love's Labour's Lost*

7 Far from respecting the rules of the games they play, the characters of *Love's Labour's Lost* are often shown as cozeners or "gamesters" whose wit is essentially used as a means to cheat authority. The two courts accuse each other of cheating several times in the play. The court of Navarre, for instance, is repeatedly shown as a court of inveterate "gamesters" and cheaters. On several occasions, the men of Navarre's court seem particularly inclined to dicing. Armado is described by Moth as a "gentleman and a gamester" in I.ii.42 and we might also suppose that he lost his shirt at dice as

Spaniards were often described as very eager players. Castiglione for instance described them as particularly keen on jests and games like chess in the *Book of the Courtier*.[16] Berowne himself places a bet on the ensuing actions as early as I.i: "I'll lay my head to any good man's hat/These oaths will prove an idle scorn." (I.i.296-297).[17] He also uses the image of dice games later in the play to answer the Princess's jest in V.ii:

> BEROWNE. White-handed mistress, one sweet word with thee.
> PRINCESS. Honey, and milk, and sugar: there is three
> BEROWNE. Nay then, two treys, an if you grow so nice,
> Methlegin, wort, and malmsey. Well run, dice!
> There's half a dozen sweets.
> PRINCESS. Seventh sweet, adieu.
> Since you can cog, I'll play no more with you.
> V.ii.230-235

8 Berowne tries to change the game of wit into a game of chance in which it is easier to cheat his opponent. The Princess refuses such a game and accuses him of cheating or "cogging" although she, herself, is cheating as she speaks, since she is disguised as Rosaline, unbeknownst to Berowne. Indeed, the court of France often resorts to cheating as well. The Princess explicitly voices her deceitful intentions before the arrival of the Muscovites: "And change your favours too, so shall your loves/ Woo contrary, deceived by these removes" (V.ii.134-135). When Navarre and his men realise the ladies of the court of France have fooled them, they immediately accuse them of not respecting the rules of the game of courtship they were trying to lead. Berowne denounces the trick the Princess and her court have played on them: "I see the trick on't. Here was a consent, / Knowing aforehand of our merriment,/ To dash it like a Christmas comedy" (V.ii.460-462).[18] The men's accusations are also directed at Boyet who has "[forestalled their] sport", as Berowne terms it, by warning the Princess of their impending arrival disguised as Muscovites (V.ii.472-473).

9 In fact, Navarre, Berowne, Longaville and Dumaine are shown as cheaters from the very beginning of the play. As early as I.i they realize they have to act against the oaths they have just sworn when the Princess of France arrives into the kingdom of Navarre. The king therefore declares, "We must of force dispense with this decree." (I.i.145). In doing so, he invalidates the law almost as soon as he has proclaimed it, something which makes his last cue in I.i ("And go we, lords, to put in practice that/ Which each to other hath so strongly sworn.", I.i.278-279) particularly ironic. In fact, the revelation of the four characters' cheating in quick succession in IV.iii is one of the most comical scenes of the play where they come to realise they have all betrayed one another. They are all caught in the act, or "taken napping" as Longaville puts it (IV.iii.122), before realizing they are all "even" (IV.iii.209). Berowne himself acknowledges that they have all "played foul play with [their] oaths" at the end of the play (V.ii.729-730). Indeed, in IV.iii Berowne manages to devise "Some tricks, some quillets, [...] to cheat the devil" (IV.iii.279) as Longaville terms it[19] and to argue that their initial oaths were actually worthless. Berowne even concludes his argument by saying: "It is religion to be thus forsworn" (IV.iii.332). Moreover, the trick the Princess has played on them during the masque of the Muscovites has made the men of Navarre lie unwittingly once more since they have sworn their loves to the wrong women – so much so that by the end of the play Navarre and his men have actually betrayed their own oaths, not once but twice: " Peace, peace, forbear! / Your oath once broke, you force not to forswear" (V.ii.439-440).

Later in V.ii Berowne cheats with words again during his dialogue with Rosaline when he interrupts her:

> BEROWNE. [...] Your capacity,
> Is of that nature that to your huge store
> Wise things seem foolish and rich things but poor.
> ROSALINE. This proves you wise and rich: for in my eye –
> BEROWNE. I am a fool, and full of poverty.
> V.ii.376-380

In this passage, Berowne steals Rosaline's witty jest in order to make it his own which prompts the latter's immediate reaction: "It were a fault to snatch words from my tongue" (V.ii.382).

10 Cheating holds an essential place in the scenes of the subplot as well – especially those involving Costard and Moth. From the outset, Costard uses his wit to "play fast and loose" with the law. Indeed, Costard's playful use of the synonyms of 'wench' has no other purpose but to escape Navarre's sentence in I.i for instance:

> KING. It was proclaimed a year's imprisonment to be taken with a wench.
> COSTARD. I was taken with none, sir, I was taken with a damsel.
> KING. Well, it was proclaimed 'damsel'.
> COSTARD. This was no damsel neither, sir, she was a virgin.
> KING. It is so varied too, for it was proclaimed 'virgin'.
> COSTARD. If it were, I deny her virginity. I was taken with a maid.
> KING. This 'maid' will not serve your turn, sir.
> COSTARD. This maid will serve my turn, sir.
> I.i.264-272

11 By transforming his 'wench' into a 'damsel', a 'virgin', and finally a 'maid' he forces Navarre to change his proclamation at least twice before he is able to arrest him. Although Costard's wordplay is ultimately unsuccessful, this passage highlights the incompatibility between wordplay and the legal use of language Navarre seeks to impose on his kingdom. In fact, in this scene, Navarre's rhetorical stiffness strongly contrasts with Costard's own linguistic resourcefulness (despite his occasional malapropisms). To assert his legal authority, Navarre has no other choice but to try to impose silence at the beginning of Costard's trial (in vain), or, in the end, to resort to force:

> COSTARD .It may be so; but if he says it is so, he is, in telling true, but so.
> KING. Peace!
> COSTARD. Be to me and every man that dares not fight.
> KING. No Words!
> COSTARD. Of other men's secrets, I beseech you.
> I.i.215-220

12 Throughout the scene, the King has been unable to voice a proclamation that would unambiguously condemn Costard. In the case of Moth, games of wit could also be construed as a form of cheating as they are essentially a way to evade his master's authority by mocking him repeatedly through witty wordplay. These are all the more efficient as Armado is unable to grasp them, let alone imitate them as we can see in I.ii when Moth even helps his master cheat his way out of his own oath to the king of Navarre through wordplay, as he interprets the phrase "to study three years" as though it meant Armado had to analyse the expression "three years" in I.ii:

> MOTH. Why, sir, is this such a piece of study? Now here is three studied ere ye'll thrice wink; and how easy it is to put 'years' to the word 'three', and study 'three years' in two words, the dancing horse will tell you.
> I.ii.42-45

Thus, an important part of the comedy lies in the fact that witty wordplay is used to evade the law or to mock authority.

A Satire of Courtly Games

13 This paves the way for a satire of the sophisticated courtly games coming from Italy or France whose underlying violence is brought to the fore throughout the play. According to John Turner, the threat of violence was inherent in courtly games of conversation and is reflected throughout the play.[20] Indeed through several occurrences of "foul play", *Love's Labour's Lost* draws our attention to the darker side of games. According to the *OED*, "foul play" referred to any "unfair conduct in a game [...] often with the additional notion of roughness or violence".[21] In other words, "foul play" contradicted the very purpose of conversational games which was to give rise to a distinguished form of sociability. Indeed, Castiglione's rules of conduct linked to jesting state the following:

> The scope and measure to make men laughe in tauntinge must also be diligentlye considered: who he is that is taunted, for it provoketh no laughter to mocke and skorne a seelye soule in miserie and calamitie, nor yet a naughtie knave and common ribaulde, bicause a man would thinke that these men deserved to be otherwise punished, then in jeastinge at.[22]

14 The jests and continual interruptions of the men of Navarre during the pageant of the Nine Worthies may therefore be construed as a form of "foul play". When they deliberately ridicule the pageant, Navarre and his men break one of the elementary rules of the courtier's game according to which a gentleman should not play against a significantly weaker player or one of a markedly lower social class. The Princess and ladies of France enjoy this form of entertainment as well as according to the Princess: "That sport that best pleases that doth least know how"(V.ii.511). They also break this rule of conduct when they repeatedly state their intention to humiliate the court of Navarre thanks to their wit. The Princess's conception of the ultimate purpose of playing, namely "mock for mock",[23] is in fact the very opposite of the ideal of courtly play propounded in such works as Baldassare Castiglione's *Book of the Courtier* in which the author states that: "the Courtier must be circumspect that he appeere not malitious and venimous and speake tauntes and quippies only for spite and to touch the quick [...]."[24] Therefore, the Princess' principle of ludic retaliation and her will to ridicule Navarre and his court, even to "shame" them ("So shall we stay, mocking intended game,/And they, well mocked, depart away with shame.", V.ii.155-156), stands in sharp contrast to the ideal of play found in such courtesy books. Berowne's comment at the end of the Muscovite scene, "By heaven, all dry-beaten with pure scoff!" (V.ii.263) also highlights the shift from witty jesting to complete humiliation through "scoff".

15 Moreover, the play strongly opposes these courtly games that came from Italy, France or Spain to simpler children's games. The allusions to children's games are numerous throughout the play, and especially in IV.iii:

> BEROWNE. All hid, all hid, an old infant play
> Like a demigod here sit I in the sky,
> And wretched fools' secrets heedfully o'er-eye.
> More sacks to the mill! O heavens, I have my wish!
> Dumaine transformed! Four woodcocks in a dish!
> IV.iii.70-74

16 Here, Berowne first compares the unfolding scene to a game of hide-and-seek ("All hid, all hid,") and to the game of "More sacks to the mill", which, according to Paul G. Brewster was a game where "boys were accustomed to torture an unfortunate victim by throwing him on the ground and falling atop him, yelling out the formula, "Bags to [on] the mill". This summon called up other lads, who then added their weight."[25] Navarre and his court are much more apt to play at children's games such as hide-and-seek, bags to the mill or push-pin ("And Nestor play at push-pin with the boys," IV.iii.161).[26] This is all the more ironic as Holofernes insists on the courtly nature games of the court of Navarre in the preceding scene: "Away, the gentles are at their game, and we will to our recreation." (IV.ii.145). Incidentally, one of the wittiest and most playful characters of *Love's Labour's Lost*, Moth, is himself just a boy which is why the schoolmaster Holofernes tells him to go "whip [his] gig" (V.i.55) when, in fact, he has been thoroughly ridiculed by the child's witty wordplay in V.i. These childish modes of play stand in sharp contrast to the more sophisticated games of tennis or fencing which were distinctively aristocratic and which were often imported from France, Spain or Italy.[27] In this regard, the satire of games is particularly perceptible through Armado. Indeed, Armado's pedantry is mocked through the technical fencing metaphors that keep cropping up in his cues in I.ii.143-146 or in V.i.49-51 for instance. Throughout the play, children's games therefore act as foil to more courtly games in order to highlight the excessive sophistication of the latter, their natural and childish roughness highly contrasting with the more threatening underlying violence of courtly contests for prestige and "praise".

End game: Time and games in *Love's Labour's Lost*

17 Through its shrewd "anatomy of the modes of playing",[28] *Love's Labour's Lost* also raises the question of the very purpose of play through the relation of games and the passing of time. Throughout the play, games seem to follow a circular pattern highlighted by the Princess's cue of V.ii "There's no such sport as sport by sport o'erthrown" (V.ii.152). The repetition of the word "sport" underlines the vicious circle in which the players are trapped. Similarly, the Princess's earlier cue "mock for mock is my only intent" (V.ii.140) illustrates the never-ending temporality of the games played by the courtiers of Navarre and France. Each game is therefore overthrown by another and bound to start again. The repeated accusations of cheating we have underlined only interrupt the pattern of play temporarily so it can start anew, so much so that the games cannot reach a clear and indisputable conclusion at the end of the play. Furthermore, the highly symmetrical pattern of the play which focuses on two groups, or teams, of four characters also brings to the fore this endless cycle: each game is played between all eight protagonists in a repetitive motion as we can see each time the two courts meet. In V.ii, the Princess of France also argues that games have no other purpose than themselves in a cue that highlights the inherent sterility of any "sport":

> PRINCESS. That sport best pleases that doth least know how –
> Where zeal strives to content, and the contents
> Dies in the zeal of that which it presents;
> Their form confounded makes most form in mirth,
> When great things labouring perish in their birth.
> V.ii.511-515

Berowne then argues this definition can be applied not only to the pageant of the Nine Worthies but to their own pastimes as well: "A right description of our sport, my lord" (V.ii.516). The purpose of such games, therefore, is none other but a simple "lining to the time" (V.ii.755) as the Princess puts it at the very end of the play.

18 However, the escapist and circular temporality of such games is brought to an abrupt end by Marcadé's announcement of the death of the king of France in V.ii. Only an exterior disruption as unsettling as the death of the Princess's father could end the repetitive pattern of their play. The endless succession of their games only momentarily allows the characters of the play to "[neglect] time" as Berowne says in one of his last cues: "For your fair sakes have we neglected time,/ Played foul play with our oaths" (V.ii.729-730). Indeed, "pastimes" are construed as a way of diverting the characters from the thought of death and the passing of time, as shown by the meaning of the word "solace" in Berowne's cue in IV.iii: "We will with some strange pastime solace them, / Such as the shortness of time can shape" (IV.iii.346-347). As we can see in the *OED*, in this occurrence, "solace" both means "to cheer, comfort, console" and "to entertain or recreate". The conflation of these two meanings is particularly enlightening. According to Jean-Charles Darmon, the thought of distraction as a way to escape from the thought of death and grief originated in Montaigne's *Essais* and represented a significant early modern shift in the theories on distraction that had usually been described by earlier philosophers rather as a way to steer clear of harmful passions.[29] In this perspective, this sudden irruption of death on stage forces the characters to acknowledge the irreversible temporality of human life and to relinquish their past witty jests and taunts for "honest plain words" (V.ii.727). Indeed, a shadow is cast on their past sport at the close of the play as Berowne, who has been tasked by Rosaline to "enforce the pained impotent to smile" (V.ii.822) declares "Mirth cannot move a soul in agony" (V.ii.825). In fact, Berowne's allusion to "A death's face in a ring" (V.ii.598) during the pageant of the Nine Worthies already paves the way for the motif of the *memento mori*. The end of *Love's Labour's Lost* could therefore be seen as a theatrical enactment of the *memento mori* as, in the end, it reminds its characters as well as its audience of the true purpose of play, namely, to cheat the "cormorant devouring time" (I.i.4) the King of Navarre alludes to in his opening cue.

19 By overturning the ludic ideals of courtly conversation embodied by the image of tennis, Shakespeare draws our attention to the less refined and certainly more comical dimension of wit and jests in *Love's Labour's Lost*. However, the playful tone of the comedy enhanced by these continual games and jests between the two courts is also tempered by the darker themes of violence and death that repeatedly crop up throughout the play before bringing it to its very sudden end. Very much like other Shakespearean comedies, such as *Twelfth Night*, the comedy that is *Love's Labour's Lost* is also comprised of more tragic undertones. The depiction of games in the play illustrates its generic ambiguity as they both significantly contribute to the play's comical and satirical dimensions and hint at the characters' essential anxiety regarding

the irreversible passing of time. In this respect, *Love's Labour's Lost* can be described as a theatrical *vanitas* in which the merriments of the youthful "academe" of Navarre are inherently linked to a deep-seated awareness of the fundamentally transient nature of such pleasures.

NOTES

1. Louis A. Montrose, ""Sport by sport o'erthrown": *Love's Labour's Lost* and the Politics of Play", *Texas Studies in Literature and Language*, Vol.18, N°4, Winter 1977: 528-552.

2. Katherine R. Larson, "Conversational Games and the Articulation of Desire in Shakespeare's *Love's Labour's Lost* and Mary Wroth's *Love's Victory*", *English Literary Renaissance*, Volume 40, Issue 2, Spring 2010: 165-190.

3. Donatella Baldini, "The Play of the Courtier: Correspondences between Castiglione's *Il libro del Cortegiano* and Shakespeare's *Love's Labour's Lost*", *Quaderni d'Italianistica* 18, 1997: 5-22.

4. All references to *Love's Labour's Lost* are taken from William Shakespeare, *Love's Labour's Lost*, ed. William C. Carroll, Cambridge, CUP, 2009.

5. Baldassare Castiglione, *The Book of the Courtier*, transl. by Thomas Hoby, London, published by David Nutt, 1900, p. 154.

6. "ARMADO Now by the salt wave of the Mediterraneum, a sweet touch, a quick venue of wit! Snip, snap, quick and home. It rejoiceth my intellect. True wit!" (V.i.49-51).

7. "Shakespeare's comedy captures perfectly the mockery of those real-life court conversations into which the endless jostle for personal space and prestige was sublimated" (John Turner in *Shakespeare: Out of Court: Dramatizations of Court Society*, London, Macmillan Press, 1990, p. 25).

8. George Puttenham, *The Art of English Poesy: A Critical Edition*, eds. Frank Whigham and Wayne A. Rebhorn, Ithaca and London, Cornell University Press, 2007, p. 321.

9. George Puttenham, *op. cit.,* p. 292.

10. Stefano Guazzo, *The Art of Conversation*, printed for J. Brett, London, 1738 [1581], p. 118.

11. Baldassare Castiglione, *op. cit.*, p.370.

12. Jean Michel-Déprats translates these lines as follows: "Balles bien renvoyées, joli jeu d'esprit" in William Shakespeare, *Comédies I*, (*Œuvres complètes*, V), Paris, Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, Gallimard, 2013, p. 769.

13. "Most humbly complayning shew unto your hignesse your daily orators, the Bowiers, Fletchers, Stringers and Arrowhead makers of this your realme, that where for the advancement and maintenance of Archerie, the better to be maintained and had within the same, and for the avoiding of divers and many unlawfull games and plaies, occupied and practised within this realme, to the great hurt and let of shooting and Archerie [...].

Be it also enacted by the authority aforesaid that no maner of Artificer or Craftsman of any handicraft or occupation [...] or any servingman, shall from the said feast of nativity of St John Baptist, play at the Tables, Tennis, Dice, Cards, Bowles, Cloith, Coiting, [...] or any other unlawfull game out of Christmas, under paine of twenty shillings to be forfeit for every time [...]" in *The statutes at large: conteyning all such acts which at any time heretofore haue beene extant in print from Magna Charta, vntill the sixteenth yeere of the raigne of our most gratious soueraigne lord Iames*, London, 1618, p. 735-738.

14. "Undoubtedly they that write of the firste inventions of thinges / have good cause to suppose Lucifer prince of devilles / to be the firste inventour of dice playing / and helle the place where it was founde /" (First Book, Chapter XXVI, in Thomas Elyot, *The Boke Named The Governour*, 1531, http://pages.uoregon.edu/rbear/gov/gov1.htm, last accessed February 26 2015).

15. Baldassare Castiglione, *op. cit*., p. 369.

16. On jesting: "Also it appeareth propre to the Spaniardes to invent meerie conceits." Baldassare Castiglione, *op. cit*., p. 153. On chess and other games: "There be many Spaniardes excellent at it, and in many other games, whiche for all that bestowe not much studye upon it, nor yet lay aside the compassing of other matters" (*ibid.*, p. 140).

17. Moreover, the oaths themselves might be seen as a form of bet between Longaville, Dumaine, Berowne and Navarre as they test each other's capacity to enforce the oath they have taken.

18. Unlike Berowne's previous mention of the word "trick" (V.ii.416) which meant "trace", here it probably refers to the first meaning we find in the *OED*: "A crafty or fraudulent device of a mean or base kind; an artifice to deceive or cheat; a stratagem, ruse, wile; esp. in phrase *to play (show) one a trick, to put a trick or tricks upon*."

19. Longaville also refers to Berowne's arguments as "glozes" (IV.iii.339) which are defined in the OED as "2. A. Flattery, deceit; an instance of this, a flattering speech, etc."

20. "Its nine scenes, astonishingly few for a play so long, are alive with the tensions that typify the rhythms of courtly relationships in their most characteristic field of competition, where festive pleasure and the threat of violence were never far apart: conversation" (John Turner, *op. cit.,* p. 20).

21. 14.a. *Sport* and *Games*. Contrary to rule or established custom, irregular, unfair; said also of the player. [...] b. *esp.* in *foul play*: unfair conduct in a game; *transf.* unfair or treacherous dealing, often with the additional notion of roughness or violence.

22. Baldassare Castiglione, *op. cit*., p. 158.

23. PRINCESS. The effect of my intent is to cross theirs.
They do it but in mockery merriment,
And mock for mock is my only intent. (V.ii.138-140)

24. Thomas Hoby, *The Book of the Courtier*, 1561.

25. Paul G. Brewster, "Games and Sports in Shakespeare", FF communications edited for the Folklore Fellows, vol. LXXII, n°177, 1959, p. 149.

26. According to Paul G. Brewster, pushpin is "a game where the player tried to push his pin so that it will lie across that of his opponent" (*ibid.*).

27. According to Heiner Gillmeister tennis originated in the cloisters of France in the 12th century (*Tennis, A Cultural History*, London, Leicester University Press, 1998, p. 34).

28. Louis A. Montrose, *op. cit*., p. 548.

29. "Mais Montaigne – on s'en est trop peu étonné – déporte la pratique de la diversion de l'expérience de l'amour (qui sert de paradigme à sa légitimation dans les vers de Lucrèce qu'il cite) à celle de la pensée de la mort – il n'est nullement question d'incitation à la diversion au sujet de la mort, ni dans le *De rerum natura*, ni dans aucun texte source du corpus épicurien. Comme si la pensée de la mort relevait, en l'occurrence, de la même thérapeutique morale que cette frénésie érotique dont la diversion, dans les vers du chant IV de Lucrèce, nous aidait à guérir, en nous en détournant.
Détournement, déplacement, au sens le plus fort, qui entre en résonance, dans le même essai, avec l'expérience de la mort de La Boétie, et de la ruse qui permit à Montaigne d'en soulager le chagrin : Montaigne rappelle, dans le paragraphe qui suit immédiatement les vers de Lucrèce, comme c'est en se faisant artificiellement amoureux qu'il essaya de se divertir de la mort de son ami. [...]
Pratique, vis-à-vis de la mort, bien peu « voisine » en vérité de la philosophie d'Epicure ! Pour le Sage du Jardin, c'est bien plutôt à la pensée de la mort comme « rien », rien pour nous, qu'il

conviendrait de s'adonner, et non à son occultation di-vertissante" (Jean-Charles Darmon, *Philosophies du divertissement Le Jardin imparfait des Modernes*, Paris, Editions Desjonquères, 2009, p. 24-25).

ABSTRACTS

This paper aims at exploring the different playful uses of games, especially games of wit, in Shakespeare's Love's Labour's Lost and their meaning. My argument is that through the many occurrences of cheating and "foul play" which pervade the text, *Love's Labour's Lost* depicts a satire of early modern courtly games. The sophisticated games of wit and sports propounded by courtesy books of the time – such as Baldassare Castiglione's *Book of The Courtier* or Stefano Guazzo's *Civil Conversation* for instance – are repeatedly turned into bawdy banter and less dignified distractions. They are also opposed to the greater simplicity of children's games throughout the play. This satire draws our attention to the undercurrent of violence pervading courtly forms of play. It also paves the way for a deeper reflexion on the relation between playing and time in which pastimes are construed as a way to evade the thought of death eventually embodied on stage by the arrival of Marcadé in the final act. In this perspective, *Love's Labour's Lost* may also be read as a form of theatrical memento mori reminding its characters as well as its audience of the inherent sterility of the games they play.

Cet article vise à analyser les différentes représentations de jeux et plus précisément de jeux d'esprit dans Love's Labour's Lost ainsi que leur signification. En effet, à travers les nombreuses occurrences de tricherie ou de « foul play » qui parsèment le texte, *Love's Labour's Lost* dessine une satire des jeux de cour de l'époque moderne. Les jeux sophistiqués, jeux d'esprit ou sports, dont des livres de courtoisie de l'époque – comme *Le Livre du Courtisan* de Baldassare Castiglione, ou *La Conversation civile* de Stefano Guazzo – font l'éloge sont transformés à plusieurs reprises en jeux de mots grossiers ou en divertissements moins respectables. Cette satire attire notre sur la violence qui sous-tend les différents jeux que l'on trouvait à la cour. Elle permet également d'aboutir à une réflexion plus approfondie sur la relation entre le jeu et le temps dans laquelle les passetemps sont perçus comme un moyen d'échapper à la pensée de la mort, incarnée sur scène par l'arrivée de Marcadé au dernier acte. Dans cette perspective, *Love's Labour's Lost* peut aussi être lue comme une forme de memento mori dramatique rappelant à ses personnages ainsi qu'à son public la stérilité fondamentale de leurs jeux et de tout divertissement.

INDEX

Mots-clés: Peines d'amour perdues, jeu, jeu de mots, divertissement
Keywords: Love's Labour's Lost, wit, wordplay, pastimes

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